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**Latin America
Review**

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22 May 1987

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Articles have been coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Comments and queries regarding this publication may be directed to the Chief, Production Staff, Office of African and Latin American Analysis.

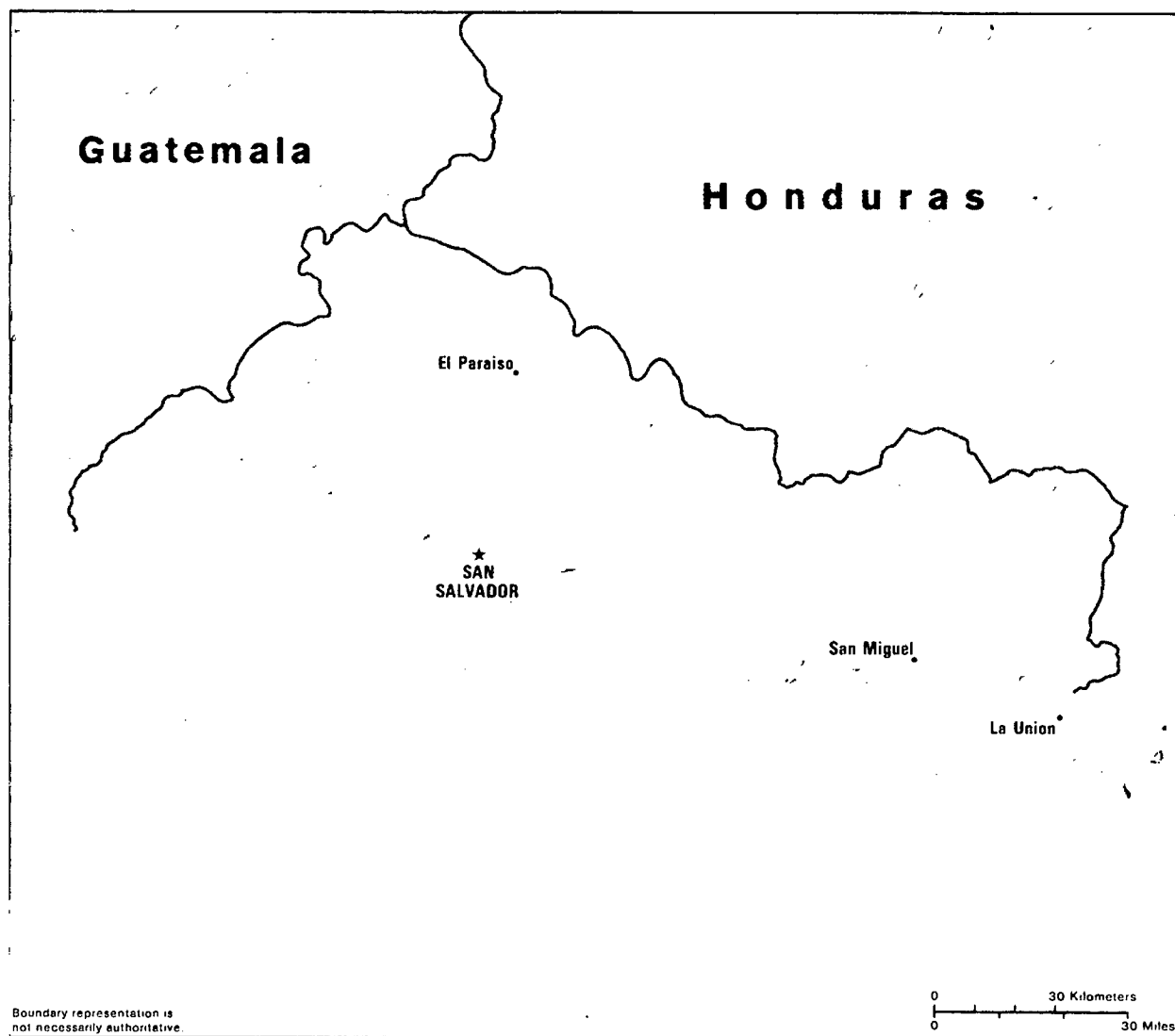
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El Salvador: Major Guerrilla Attacks, 1985-Present



Date	Location	Army Losses	Confirmed Rebel Dead	Comment
March 1987	El Paraiso 4th Brigade Headquarters	64 Killed 79 Wounded	8	Rebels used special forces, infiltrators; Army caught offguard.
June 1986	San Miguel 3rd Brigade Headquarters	50 Killed 100 Wounded	15	Poor security at base.
October 1985	La Union Military Training Center	43 Killed 75 Wounded	10	Rebels used infiltrations; target was lightly defended.

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Latin America**Review**

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Articles**El Salvador:
Implications of the Guerrilla
Attack at El Paraiso**

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The successful attack by Salvadoran insurgents at El Paraiso accomplished an important guerrilla objective by focusing international attention on an insurgency that has seen its fortunes wane in recent years, but the Army retains the upper hand and the battlefield initiative. As in previous spectacular successes—which have occurred at about nine-month intervals since 1985—the rebel assault demonstrated glaring deficiencies in the military's security, intelligence, and leadership capabilities. We believe the insurgents will score similar successes from time to time, in part because the High Command has done little to improve security at key installations or to discipline senior officers guilty of negligence. We judge, however, that the guerrillas are unlikely to stage a sustained campaign of large-scale attacks because of the need for extensive planning and preparation as well as the high risk to their elite commando units. So long as reversals like El Paraiso occur infrequently, the course of the war is not likely to shift in favor of the insurgents.

Like earlier guerrilla attacks on the military training center at La Union in November 1985 and 3rd Brigade headquarters at San Miguel in June 1986, the assault on 4th Brigade headquarters at El Paraiso on 30 March was well planned and executed.

inside the compound. The assault was spearheaded by a small number of guerrilla sappers—out of an attacking force of some 150 men—who were able to penetrate carefully prepared perimeter defenses, including mines and barbed wire, without casualties. The US Embassy believes the guerrillas' sophisticated and coordinated use of mortar and rocket fire—tactics not employed in the attacks at La Union and San Miguel—suggests the assault force may have had Nicaraguan or Cuban training.

Poor security practices, weak leadership, and questionable tactics by government troops also played a major role in the guerrillas' success. The garrison at El Paraiso was caught offguard when it failed to deploy adequate reconnaissance patrols,

asleep when the insurgents struck. Brigade officers failed to check on sentries during the night, and guards who remained alert were either killed quickly or had no means of direct communication with their superiors. In the earlier attacks at La Union and San Miguel, the insurgents took advantage of poorly maintained base perimeters to breach the defenses. Inadequate counterintelligence procedures are believed to have enabled the insurgents to infiltrate agents posing as government troops well in advance of all three attacks.

Temporary Propaganda Payoffs

The guerrillas' primary rationale in launching these spectacular operations, in our opinion, is to create the impression for propaganda purposes that they are a potent military force.

By staging large-scale attacks periodically—one successful attack about every nine months since 1985—the rebels divert attention from the more substantive government advances in counterinsurgency operations. Moreover, the guerrillas probably hope such assaults eventually will spark urban anti-government dissatisfaction with a seemingly endless war and force the government into power-sharing negotiations.

The advantages gained by the guerrillas in overrunning military garrisons have tended to dissipate quickly. US Embassy reporting indicates

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that the attacks have not resulted in increased popular or international support for the rebels, and international press coverage of the insurgency has quickly subsided. Lacking the ability to sustain military pressure, the guerrillas invariably have reverted to low-level ambushes and economic sabotage, thereby losing their propaganda advantage.

More Spectaculars Likely

We believe the guerrillas will be able to repeat such spectacular actions from time to time, largely because of Army deficiencies. Despite the formation of several military commissions to investigate and redress shortcomings at key installations, few substantive procedural changes have resulted. The three major attacks since 1985 have demonstrated that certain Army commanders have been slow to learn from their colleagues' mistakes and that the guerrillas are quick to exploit weaknesses. In our judgment, the unwillingness of the High Command to discipline or replace mediocre field commanders contributes significantly to the complacent attitude and attendant morale problems that have led to guerrilla success.

We believe several factors, however, will prevent the insurgents from sustaining pressure on the armed forces through large-scale attacks:

- [redacted] that considerable time is needed for planning and training. According to a captured guerrilla combatant, preparations for a planned attack against the lightly defended international airport late last year—canceled after the Army found out and took precautions—lasted for at least two months and included intensive map studies, mockups, and field rehearsals by specialized troops.

- Guerrilla concerns about Army intelligence and tightened security complicate planning and probably cause them to delay or abort some operations.
- The guerrillas cannot easily replace losses to the highly trained and motivated elite units that conduct the assaults. [redacted] that as many as half the elite sappers who attacked San Miguel and La Union were killed. The eight to 10 guerrillas killed at El Paraiso probably represent one-third of the estimated number of special forces that penetrated the perimeter. [redacted]

Net Assessment

On balance, periodic reversals such as El Paraiso will not change the course of the war, in our opinion. The armed forces retain the battlefield initiative, and the guerrillas remain on the defensive, relying largely on economic sabotage and terrorism to prolong the war. Lacking the resources to follow up with significant and sustained military pressure, we doubt the guerrillas can accomplish their key strategic objectives—driving the armed forces into a garrison-bound, defensive posture and forcing the government into power-sharing negotiations. Previous attacks have demonstrated the Army can replace its losses and resume aggressive counterinsurgency operations quickly. [redacted]

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**Suriname:
The Evolving Insurgency**

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Since the start of the rebellion last July, Ronnie Brunswijk and his rural black followers have generally maintained the military initiative through periodic strikes on military installations and the country's economic infrastructure, including the key bauxite sector. The Surinamese Army has yet to develop into an effective counterinsurgency force, and we believe the guerrillas—so far largely self-sufficient—could probably maintain their current level of activity indefinitely. However, in our view, the insurgents lack the manpower, weapons, and leadership necessary to mount a sustained attack on the capital and topple the military government any time soon.



Rebel leader Ronnie Brunswijk

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NRC Handelsblad ©

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Rebel Goals and Strategy

Dutch press reports indicate that former Surinamese soldier Ronnie Brunswijk decided to use his renegade band and launch the rebellion following a meeting last summer with several Surinamese exile leaders in the Netherlands.

the insurgents' goal is to depose Head of Government Bouterse and restore democracy. We believe, however, that other—probably more significant—factors explain the motives of some of the guerrillas.

Brunswijk's quarrel with Bouterse is an unclear personal vendetta stemming from the rebel leader's service in the Surinamese Army in the early 1980s. US diplomatic reporting also indicates that many rural blacks resent Bouterse's efforts to abrogate their near-total autonomy by integrating them into a national political system.

Until recently, the insurgents seemed to have operated under a long-term strategy for bringing about Bouterse's downfall. The rebels' main military adviser, Michel van Rey, indicated in a press interview that the rebels hoped to attain their objective by damaging the country's economic base to such an extent that civilian and military unrest would ensue, thereby facilitating the dictator's ouster.

Guerrilla sabotage of powerlines leading to the Paranam bauxite facility earlier this year brought bauxite and alumina production—the country's key foreign exchange earners—to a virtual standstill and caused serious power outages in the capital. Alumina refining operations resumed recently, but mining and smelting activities were still at a halt in early May. Moreover, the powerlines remain highly vulnerable to further guerrilla sabotage.

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Recent events

suggest that the rebels would like to move faster with their original strategy because they are growing tired of fighting and believe that Bouterse's promised transition to democratic rule—beginning with a constitutional referendum in September—will short-circuit their efforts. They are probably also disappointed that antiregime demonstrations in February, which were sparked by severe consumer shortages and power outages in Paramaribo, have not continued.

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Perhaps as part of their new strategy, the insurgents have begun launching attacks in the west while maintaining pressure on the Army south and east of Paramaribo. the rebels have attacked police stations near Paramaribo recently to obtain badly needed arms and ammunition.

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Rebel Capabilities

The guerrilla force, which probably numbers between 200 and 300 men, has a number of key military strengths, including familiarity with jungle terrain, relatively high morale, and an ability to conduct classic guerrilla warfare against a government ill-prepared to confront it. So far, the insurgents have not had to rely on foreign suppliers; they have lived off the land, and received food and other supplies from rural blacks or in neighboring French Guiana. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the rebel arsenal consists mostly of shotguns, sporting rifles, some FALs, UZIs, and explosives, much of which have been captured in raids on government installations and bauxite facilities. [REDACTED]

We doubt that the guerrillas could achieve a clear military victory over the Army with their current resources. To do so, we judge they would need additional manpower, more coordinated leadership, and, most important, well-established external supply lines for ammunition and such sophisticated weapons as antitank guns. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the fractious exile supporters have yet to establish the network of material aid needed by the insurgents. [REDACTED]

France seems to be the only Western government that is considering material aid for the insurgents. US diplomatic reporting indicates that Paris is concerned about the security of its space center in French Guiana in the face of the presence of about 8,000 Surinamese refugees and Bouterse's continuing relationship with Libya. Paris is pursuing negotiations with Paramaribo to resolve the refugee problem. [REDACTED]

The insurgents' failure to enlarge their base of support beyond the rural blacks is a major shortcoming in their drive for power. The US Embassy indicates that most Surinamers are grateful to Brunswijk's forces for challenging the authoritarian Bouterse regime but remain fearful of a takeover by them. The exile leaders, who probably hope to return to power on Brunswijk's coattails, also have no internal base of support. Moreover, Embassy reporting indicates that traditional political party leaders would resist sharing power with Brunswijk and his supporters. [REDACTED]

Government Response

Government forces have been largely ineffective in countering the insurgency. The 2,000-man Surinamese Army is poorly equipped, trained, and led, and has exhibited low morale on numerous occasions. In general, the Army has responded to rebel attacks rather than taking the initiative. The only notable exception was the military's offensive last November, which succeeded in only temporarily removing guerrillas from designated areas and earned the regime international criticism for killing scores of rural black villagers. [REDACTED]

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Surinamese military leaders are counting heavily on new acquisitions of military hardware from various suppliers to enable them to defeat the guerrillas. The Surinamese helicopter arsenal has increased from zero to three since the insurgency began, but we have little evidence that the new equipment has significantly improved counterinsurgency capabilities.



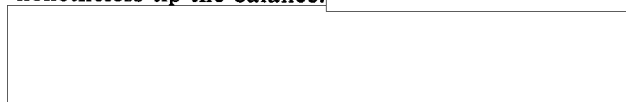
Bouterse also has been pursuing a political strategy designed to defuse any opposition sparked by the rebellion. Recent Embassy reporting indicates that leaders of Suriname's traditional political parties are going along with Bouterse's plan because they see it as their best chance of easing him from power. The guerrillas, however, so far seem unwilling to accept a "democracy" that will most likely retain the military and Bouterse in power, either behind-the-scenes or more visibly. We believe Bouterse hopes that if his version of democratization proceeds without significant civilian opposition, the rebels will lose momentum and lay down their arms.



Outlook

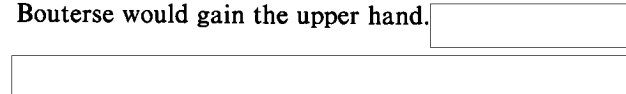
Barring additional weapons shipments to the rebels, we expect the current military stalemate to continue for at least the next six months. Without a more reliable arms and equipment network, more men, and better leadership, the rebels probably will remain unable to seize the capital and depose Bouterse before the constitutional referendum scheduled for September. Several potential developments could nonetheless tip the balance.

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should the rebels become discouraged over their inability to gain much outside aid or to build civilian support, we judge that Bouterse would gain the upper hand.

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Panama: Noriega Polishing His Image

Panamanian strongman Gen. Manuel Noriega has recently taken steps to improve his image at home and abroad, and we believe he may be laying the groundwork to become a candidate for president in 1989. In late April, the Defense Forces Chief made an unscheduled appearance at an opposition-organized conference reviewing the 1977 Panama Canal treaties and their implementation. According to the US Embassy, Noriega surprised the potentially hostile audience with his positive and upbeat demeanor

The Defense Chief said it was not necessary that a military man become administrator of the Panama Canal Commission in 1990. He also indicated that defense of the Canal in the year 2000 must involve all Panamanians, including the political opposition. The Embassy reports that some opposition members interpreted Noriega's remarks as a possible step toward dialogue between the regime and its domestic opponents.

Noriega's overture to the opposition complements other efforts to improve his image—and that of the regime—both domestically and with US officials. According to the Embassy, the Defense Chief and other General Staff members recently met with the Panamanian Catholic Church hierarchy in an effort to ease frictions with the clergy. Relations are strained by events such as the assassination of Noriega opponent Hugo Spadafora in September 1985, President Barletta's ouster two weeks later, and allegations of military involvement in narcotics trafficking. In addition, Noriega has informed US officials that secure computerized voting equipment would be in place for the 1989 election to ensure against the irregular ballot counting that took place in 1984.

and public statements by some government officials indicate that Noriega's supporters believe he will be the ruling



Defense Forces Chief General Noriega and Chief of Staff Diaz at the opposition-sponsored conference. In what may have been an attempt to enhance Noriega's conciliatory approach, Diaz accused the conferees of attempting to foster the downfall of the military-backed regime.

coalition's candidate in 1989, despite his repeated denials to the press and US officials. He probably has not reached a final decision and will weigh domestic and international reaction to his conciliatory stance before doing so. Noriega's initiative may bring a slight thaw between the regime and many of its chief critics, but the hardcore opposition, particularly the Christian Democratic Party, probably will continue to decry the military's overweening role in politics.

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Latin America Briefs

Mexico

Prison Abuses Discredit Governor [REDACTED]

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Government mishandling of a riot at the San Luis Potosi state penitentiary in early March has damaged Governor Florencio Salazar Martinez's standing in the state and embarrassed the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Rioting prisoners were protesting poor sanitation, inadequate water supply, corruption, and a "hit squad" allegedly responsible to the prison director. They were quickly subdued, but the US Embassy says that authorities committed abuses in singling out for punishment a group of 17 reform-minded prisoners. This group did not start the riot, but officials probably believed isolating it would make it easier for them to restore order. The group was transferred to another prison and denied visitation rights. Only after family members protested in the state capital were the individuals returned to the penitentiary. Embassy sources inside the prison say that one of the group's members was then killed and two others wounded in knife attacks by prisoners loyal to the director—the "hit squad." [REDACTED]

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The Embassy reports that the Salazar administration, which the ruling PRI supports, is being criticized for its failure to correct conditions that led to the riot and for the Governor's refusal to meet with the press. Salazar is coming under fire from human rights activists and even some public officials for not addressing abuses in the state's penal system. The Governor will need to take steps to limit further damage to his image—possibly by firing the prison director. In the meantime, opponents almost certainly will take advantage of the scandal to further embarrass the Governor and weaken popular support for the PRI. [REDACTED]

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Brazil

Space Program Problems [REDACTED]

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Brazil's continuing economic problems are setting back the country's ambitious space program and highlighting the constraints that are likely to plague indigenous scientific research in the future. [REDACTED] the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research (INPE) is currently unable to purchase or import \$30 million in satellite test equipment from foreign suppliers because of tough budget cuts and tight foreign exchange restrictions. US Embassy and Brazilian press reports say that INPE requires the equipment to debug satellites scheduled for launch in 1989 as part of Brazil's \$700 million, 10-year space program. The space program has been a high-priority objective for the Sarney government, which, by developing an indigenous satellite program, had hoped to sell satellite-data-gathering services to Third World countries. Without the imported equipment, it is unlikely that Brazil will be able to meet its 1989 launch date because of difficulty in overcoming technical problems, particularly with the development of sophisticated guidance control systems needed for space launch vehicles. [REDACTED]

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Colombia

Loan Request

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Colombian officials told commercial bankers earlier this month that Bogota wants \$800 million annually in loans through 1990, rather than a rescheduling, to close a projected financial gap. Recently replaced Finance Minister Gaviria outlined to bankers the development goals of Bogota's 1987-90 economic program, emphasizing his government's intentions to counter insurgent attacks against economic targets and promising that the oil basin along the Ecuadorean border and the domestic banking sector would be opened to foreign investors. Most bankers agree that Colombia deserves voluntary lending,

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US Embassy officials do not expect last week's Cabinet shuffle to yield changes in economic and financial policies. Gaviria was replaced by his deputy, Luis Fernando Alarcon, an experienced technocrat.

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